

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 423) was agreed to.

#### RAILS TO RESOURCES ACT OF 2000

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 718, S. 2253.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2253) to authorize the establishment of a joint United States-Canada commission to study the feasibility of connecting the rail system to Alaska to the North American continental rail system, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations with an amendment, as follows:

(Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic.)

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Rails to Resources Act of 2000".*

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

*Congress finds that—*

(1) rail transportation is an essential component of the North American intermodal transportation system;

(2) the development of economically strong and socially stable communities in the western United States and Canada was encouraged significantly by government policies promoting the development of integrated transcontinental, interstate and interprovincial rail systems in the states, territories and provinces of the two countries;

(3) United States and Canadian federal support for the completion of new elements of the transcontinental, interstate and interprovincial rail systems was halted before rail connections were established to the state of Alaska and the Yukon Territory;

(4) both public and private lands in Alaska, the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia, including lands held by aboriginal peoples, contain extensive deposits of oil, gas, coal and other minerals as well as valuable forest products which presently are inaccessible, but which could provide significant economic benefit to local communities and to both nations if an economically efficient transportation system was available;

(5) rail transportation in otherwise isolated areas facilitates controlled access and reduced overall impact to environmentally sensitive areas;

(6) the extension of the continental rail system through northern British Columbia and the Yukon Territory to the current terminus of the Alaska Railroad would significantly benefit the U.S. and Canadian visitor industries by facilitating the comfortable movement of passengers over long distances while minimizing effects on the surrounding areas; and

(7) ongoing research and development efforts in the rail industry continue to increase the efficiency of rail transportation, ensure safety, and

decrease the impact of rail service on the environment.

#### SEC. 3. AGREEMENT FOR A UNITED STATES-CANADA BILATERAL COMMISSION.

*The President is authorized and urged to enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada to establish a joint commission to study the feasibility and advisability of linking the rail system in Alaska to the nearest appropriate point on the North American continental rail system.*

#### SEC. 4. COMPOSITION OF COMMISSION.

##### (a) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) *TOTAL MEMBERSHIP.*—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to be composed of 20 members, of which 10 members are appointed by the President and 10 members are appointed by the Government of Canada.

(2) *GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS.*—The Agreement should provide for the membership of the Commission, to the maximum extent practicable, to be representative of—

(A) *the interests of the local communities (including the governments of the communities), aboriginal peoples, and businesses that would be affected by the connection of the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system; and*

(B) *a broad range of expertise in areas of knowledge that are relevant to the significant issues to be considered by the Commission, including economics, engineering, management of resources (such as minerals and timber), social sciences, fish and game management, environmental sciences, and transportation.*

(b) *UNITED STATES MEMBERSHIP.*—If the United States and Canada enter into an agreement providing for the establishment of the Commission, the President shall appoint the United States members of the Commission as follows:

(1) *Two members from among persons who are qualified to represent the interests of communities and local governments of Alaska.*

(2) *One member representing the State of Alaska, to be nominated by the Governor of Alaska.*

(3) *One member from among persons who are qualified to represent the interests of Native Alaskans residing in the area of Alaska that would be affected by the extension of rail service.*

(4) *Three members from among persons involved in commercial activities in Alaska who are qualified to represent commercial interests in Alaska, of which one shall be a representative of the Alaska Railroad Corporation.*

(5) *Three members with relevant expertise, at least one of whom shall be an engineer with expertise in subarctic transportation.*

(c) *CANADIAN MEMBERSHIP.*—The Agreement should provide for the Canadian membership of the Commission to be representative of broad categories of interests of Canada as the Government of Canada determines appropriate, consistent with subsection (a)(2).

#### SEC. 5. GOVERNANCE AND STAFFING OF COMMISSION.

(a) *CHAIRMAN.*—The Agreement should provide for the Chairman of the Commission to be elected from among the members of the Commission by a majority vote of the members.

(b) *COMPENSATION AND EXPENSES OF UNITED STATES MEMBERS.*—

(1) *COMPENSATION.*—Each member of the Commission appointed by the President who is not an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall be compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code, for each day (including travel time) during which such member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Commission. Each such member who is an officer or employee of the

United States shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for services as an officer or employee of the United States.

(2) *TRAVEL EXPENSES.*—The members of the Commission appointed by the President shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Commission.

##### (c) STAFF.—

(1) *IN GENERAL.*—The Agreement should provide for the appointment of a staff and an executive director to be the head of the staff.

(2) *COMPENSATION.*—Funds made available for the Commission by the United States may be used to pay the compensation of the executive director and other personnel at rates fixed by the Commission that are not in excess of the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

(d) *OFFICE.*—The Agreement should provide for the office of the Commission to be located in a mutually agreed location within the impacted areas of Alaska, the Yukon Territory, and northern British Columbia.

(e) *MEETINGS.*—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to meet at least biannually to review progress and to provide guidance to staff and others, and to hold, in locations within the affected areas of Alaska, the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia, such additional informational or public meetings as the Commission deems necessary to the conduct of its business.

(f) *PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES.*—The Agreement should authorize and encourage the Commission to procure by contract, to the maximum extent practicable, the services (including any temporary and intermittent services) that the Commission determines necessary for carrying out the duties of the Commission. In the case of any contract for the services of an individual, funds made available for the Commission by the United States may not be used to pay for the services of the individual at a rate that exceeds the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

#### SEC. 6. DUTIES.

##### (a) STUDY.—

(1) *IN GENERAL.*—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to study and assess, on the basis of all available relevant information, the feasibility and advisability of linking the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system through the continuation of the rail system in Alaska from its northeastern terminus to a connection with the continental rail system in Canada.

(2) *SPECIFIC ISSUES.*—The Agreement should provide for the study and assessment to include the consideration of the following issues:

(A) *Railroad engineering.*

(B) *Land ownership.*

(C) *Geology.*

(D) *Proximity to mineral, timber, tourist, and other resources.*

(E) *Market outlook.*

(F) *Environmental considerations.*

(G) *Social effects, including changes in the use or availability of natural resources.*

(H) *Potential financing mechanisms.*

(3) *ROUTE.*—The Agreement should provide for the Commission, upon finding that it is feasible and advisable to link the rail system in Alaska as described in paragraph (1), to determine one or more recommended routes for the rail segment that establishes the linkage, taking into consideration cost, distance, access to potential freight markets, environmental matters, and such other factors as the Commission determines relevant.

(4) **COMBINED CORRIDOR EVALUATION.**—The Agreement should also provide for the Commission to consider whether it would be feasible and advisable to combine the power transmission infrastructure and petroleum product pipelines of other utilities into one corridor with a rail extension of the rail system of Alaska.

(b) **REPORT.**—The Agreement should require the Commission to submit to Congress and the Secretary of Transportation and to the Minister of Transport of the Government of Canada, not later than 3 years after the Commission commencement date, a report on the results of the study, including the Commission's findings regarding the feasibility and advisability of linking the rail system in Alaska as described in subsection (a)(1) and the Commission's recommendations regarding the preferred route and any alternative routes for the rail segment establishing the linkage.

#### SEC. 7. COMMENCEMENT AND TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.

(a) **COMMENCEMENT.**—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to begin to function on the date on which all members are appointed to the Commission as provided for in the Agreement.

(b) **TERMINATION.**—The Commission should be terminated 90 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report under section 6.

#### SEC. 8. FUNDING.

(a) **RAILS TO RESOURCES FUND.**—The Agreement should provide for the following:

(1) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The establishment of an interest-bearing account to be known as the "Rails to Resources Fund".

(2) **CONTRIBUTIONS.**—The contribution by the United States and the Government of Canada to the Fund of amounts that are sufficient for the Commission to carry out its duties.

(3) **AVAILABILITY.**—The availability of amounts in the Fund to pay the costs of Commission activities.

(4) **DISSOLUTION.**—Dissolution of the Fund upon the termination of the Commission and distribution of the amounts remaining in the Fund between the United States and the Government of Canada.

(b) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to any fund established as described in subsection (a)(1) \$6,000,000, to remain available until expended.

#### SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **AGREEMENT.**—The term "Agreement" means an agreement described in section 2.

(2) **COMMISSION.**—The term "Commission" means a commission established pursuant to any Agreement.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee substitute be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2253), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

#### ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS OF CERTAIN SYRIAN NATIONALS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consideration of H.R. 4681.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4681) to provide for the adjustment of status of certain Syrian nationals.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today to applaud the passage of a bill that will grant permanent residency status to a small group of Syrian Jews who fled the brutal dictatorship of Hafez Assad almost a decade ago.

In 1992, through negotiations between our State Department and the Syrian regime, President Assad allowed the last remnants of Syria's Jewish community to leave Syria. For years, this community faced religious persecution, restrictions on the right to travel and emigrate, and other forms of harassment. When Assad finally agreed to let them go, he insisted that they come to this country as tourists, rather than as refugees fleeing religious tyranny, in order to avoid the appearance that his repression had driven out a considerable number of his own citizens. We permitted this fiction in order to rescue people desperate for freedom, but obviously, the 2000 Syrian Jews who came here in 1992 were never tourists—they were seeking a permanent home and a life free of religious and political oppression.

Once safely in the United States, the Syrian Jews had no choice but to request asylum, and asylum was granted. But because of the long delays that asylees face in obtaining permanent resident status, the Syrian Jews still have not become permanent residents and gotten green cards. If they had come to the United States as the refugees they truly were, instead of as tourists, they would have become permanent residents years ago because there is no annual cap on the number of refugees permitted to move to permanent residency.

The Syrian Jews have suffered for years because of this situation, imposed on them by the terms of the secret 1992 deal with Assad. Without green cards, those among them who are doctors and dentists, as many are, are unable to practice their professions under the New York State licensing system. As asylees, the Syrian Jews face restrictions on their right to travel abroad. Finally and most important, the Syrian Jews have been stalled for years in the efforts to become full citizens of our country, something all of them ardently want.

This legislation corrects this anomaly and directs the Attorney General to grant permanent resident status to the Syrian Jews who came here in 1992. This will give this small group of people the immigration status they should have had years ago, but for the fiction that they were coming to the United States as tourists. It will permit them to begin practicing their chosen professions and moving toward full citizen-

ship. It will finally effectuate the agreement by which they emigrated from Syria in the first place. Most of all, it will guarantee the full blessings of liberty to people who want nothing more than to live in peace in a land where the government doesn't mistreat you simply because of your religion.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 4681) was read the third time and passed.

#### STEWART B. MCKINNEY HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 5417, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5417) to rename the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act as the "McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I rise today to ask the Senate to pass legislation that has been sent to us by the House of Representatives that would change the name of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This is one, small step we can take to honor a colleague who devoted his life to public service, particularly service on behalf of the most disadvantaged Americans.

Bruce F. Vento has been one of the most effective advocates on behalf of homeless people throughout his career. Mr. Vento was one of the first Members of Congress to bring the plight of the nation's homeless to the public's attention. In 1982, Bruce introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to create the Emergency Shelter Grant Program. He attached an amendment to a housing bill to provide matching grants to repair vacant buildings to be used as temporary shelters. This became the first national legislation to provide federal assistance for emergency homeless shelters.

Throughout the 1980s, Mr. Vento worked repeatedly, with his colleagues on the House Banking Committee, to raise the profile of this issue and to build the coalitions necessary to enact comprehensive legislation to help the homeless across this nation. In early 1987, Representative Vento worked to pass an aid package that included \$100 million for a program of emergency